

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9420

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 7134

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, VE

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 158657

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM JULY 11 AND
REVIEWED FOR HIM THE MATERIAL IN THE REFTEL. WE SPENT A GOOD
DEAL OF TIME GOING OVER THE HISTORICAL AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS
OF THE CUBA QUESTION IN THE OAS ON WHICH ESCOVAR IS AS YET
LARGELY AND BLISSFULLY UNINFORMED.

2. HE UNDERSTANDABLY DID WANT TO KNOW WHETHER WE WOULD VOTE
TO LIFT THE SANCTIONS. I SAID I COULD GIVE HIM NO
ASSURANCES ON THAT SCORE; FLAT CLEARLY MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON
THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN SAN JOSE. BUT I COULD TELL HIM THAT WE WOULD
COOPERATE IN AND SUPPORT A SOLUTION THAT PROVIDED UNAMBIGUOUS
FREEDOM OF ACTION WITH DUE EMPHASIS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-
INTERVENTION.

3. ON THE LATTER POINT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED WITH ME
THAT IT WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT FIDEL
CASTRO HAS NOW BEEN ABSOLVED OF HIS SINS, INCLUDING THOSE HE
COMMITTED IN THIS COUNTRY AMONG OTHERS. ESCOVAR THOUGHT A
STRONG EMPHASIS ON NON-INTERVENTION APPROPRIATE TO A RESOLUTION
LIFTING THE SANCTIONS AND SAID HE WOULD CONSULT THE PRESIDENT IN
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THAT REGARD. (I DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOV WILL BE PREPARED

TO GO BEYOND A GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE SANCTITY OF THE PRINCIPLE.)

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTER UNDERSTOOD THAT WE COULD NOT GO FORWARD TO THE SANCTIONS QUESTION WITHOUT FIRST SUCCESSFULLY DISPOSING OF THE RIO TREATY REFORMS. HE MOST EMPHATICALLY AGREED THAT THEREAFTER THE ORGAN OF CONSULTATION SHOULD NOT BE CONVOKED UNLESS A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE SANCTIONS QUESTION IS ASSURED. I EXPLAINED TO HIM THE ONE AND TWO-STEP ALTERNATIVES AND OUR BELIEF THAT THE FORMER IS PREFERABLE. HE HAD NO JUDGMENT ON THE POINT AND, DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS, PROBABLY STILL DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE TWO-STEP FORMULA. (I DID NOT GO INTO LIEVANO'S PROPOSAL FOR A SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE SINCE IT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME WHAT PRECISELY LIEVANO HAS IN MIND.). ESCOVAR WAS QUITE CLEAR IN THE CONVICTION THAT THE WORST POSSIBLE RESULT WOULD BE FAILURE IN THE ORGAN OF CONSULTATION AND THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO CONVOKE THAT BODY IF SUCH A RISK EXISTS.

5. ESCOVAR SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT LIEVANO AND RABASA MIGHT DROP IN AT THE END OF THE CONFERENCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FINAL DELIBERATIONS ON THE CUBA QUESTION. HE SAID HE WOULD BE IN MEXICO AT THE TIME AND AVAILABLE TO GO ALSO IF THAT APPEARED DESIRABLE. HE THANKED ME FOR THE RUNDOWN AND SAID HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH MACHIN.

6. COMMENT: I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ESCOVAR, AT LEAST, IS MORE INTERESTED IN THE CHANGE OF VOTING REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE RIO TREATY THAN HE IS IN THE SANCTIONS QUESTION PER SE. HE HAS ASKED ME ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO REASSURE HIM THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL IN FACT VOTE FOR THAT CHANGE. THE VENEZUELANS SEEM TO THINK THAT THE SHIFT FROM TWO-THIRDS TO A MAJORITY WILL PROVIDE SUFFICIENT EX-POST-FACTO JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR RECOGNITION OF CUBA. THE LIFTING OF THE SANCTIONS THEMSELVES THEN BECOMES FOR THEM NOT MUCH MORE THAN A FORMALITY.

7. I DO THINK, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL BE COOPERATIVE AND HOPE WE WILL STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH MACHIN AS MATTERS PROGRESS.
SHLAUDEMAN

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